

WANDERERS GO STORMING

A BLISTERING spell of power at the start of the second half saw Wycombe Wanderers storm into the second round of the F.A. Cup on Saturday for the second successive year — and the fourth time in their history. The unfortunate team to suffer were Cheltenham who, throughout the first half, had looked equally as good as their opponents.

With a penalty apiece putting the sides level at the interval, things did not look too bright for Wycombe when the second half commenced. They had looked lethargic, slow and even disinterested at times in the first half while Cheltenham's work rate stood them in good stead. Then the fireworks started.

Mick Hollifield, a potential matchwinner on these occasions, began the burst of goals with a fine left foot effort and then Paul Birdseye got into the act in the best possible style just three minutes later. Paul's crucial third goal, one of the best by a full back at Loakes Park for a long time, came after a brilliant run down the flank which ended in an equally superb shot into the back of the net.

Bravely though they tried, Cheltenham just couldn't make up the leeway. One of the main reasons was the performance of goalkeeper John Maskell. After a shaky start, "Mask" pulled out a string of memorable saves as the visitors hammered away at the home goal from long range. Maskell, flinging himself about in tremendous style, defied everything they could offer.

He wasn't the only hero on the day. Keith Mead was again in impeccable centre back form while Keith Searle worked harder than anyone upfront. These three stood out in a great team performance which has now put Wycombe Wanderers within sight of one of the greatest achievements — a place in the third round, in which the First and Second Division clubs compete.

Despite a valiant last minute fitness bid by Gary Hand, who was up at Loakes Park for a final work-out in the morning, the left back was unable to make the team and manager Brian Lee gambled by bringing in Dave Bullock in the number three shirt. Although not fully fit, Bullock's experience and coolness undoubtedly paid dividends and his physical presence made the six foot back four a formidable proposition.

Apart from Hand, the other big doubt was the Loakes Park pitch. Subjected to a fierce battering from the elements, the ground was in excellent shape, thanks to Jack Sheppard and his band of workers. The importance of a firm pitch was considered, for Wycombe's brand

of fast, first time football is doubly difficult in the wet.

And so, in front of a 5,000 strong crowd, the team lined up with memories of last year's cup battles still fresh in the mind. Unlike last season, however, when the Blues faced Newport County, the home side were favourites and perhaps it was this fact that contributed to a poor first half performance from Wanderers.

Two early raids were easily dealt with by former Wycombe

minutes gone, Cheltenham made their first visit into the home penalty area. Tony Wagstaffe slipped the ball across the box to Ken Sken who was felled from behind by Alan Phillips. Referee Trevor Spencer, who incidentally was in charge of the Newport game last year, was right on the spot and had no doubts about his decision. Dave Lewis, marked as the danger man from Cheltenham, kept his record of scoring in every round by

There were the occasional glimpses, however, when Hollifield's fine run into the box was finished by a flashing header from Searle, but Hall made his best save of the match to cling onto the ball whilst in mid-air.

In general, though, Wycombe were well below their best. Their frustration was summed up in the 28th minute when Howard Kennedy went into the referee's book for dissent after protesting over a foul on Jones.

decided the match. At that stage Wycombe looked unlikely to get back on terms before half time and they now started the second period with fresh confidence.

Almost before the spectators had settled into their seats, Wanderers stormed into attack. Hollifield, who so often gets behind defences on the bottom wing, got through on the blind side yet again and was only thwarted by the feet of the goalkeeper in the 46th minute. Then, 60 seconds later, he

reached. Cheltenham could hardly have known what hit them. In three minutes they had seen all their earlier work wasted — shattered by superb attacking football and two goals that would have taxed the best of defences.

Many sides would have buckled and gone under in the face of such pressure. Not Cheltenham. They came back in the 64th minute with Maskell gathering Jones' swearing shot.

From the goal kick Alexander made 20 yards and crashed in a low drive right across the goaline, with no-one able to get the vital touch.

Back came Town again, this time Paul Crowley thumping in another long range drive which possessed such force that Maskell had to push the ball up before gathering at the second attempt. Thirty seconds later Jones crashed in another 30 yard effort that flew inches over the bar. It wasn't over yet!

With Crowley now pushing up into midfield, the visitors left only three at the back, hoping the extra midfielder would pull back a goal. He also did just that in the 73rd minute. Getting all his power behind the ball, Crowley flashed in another cannonball drive which was destined for the top corner until Maskell pulled out his best save of the match by tipping the ball away with his finger tips.

Although reducing their power at the back by playing the extra man upfield, Cheltenham

brought into operation an effective off side trap which caught Wycombe on more than one occasion. This broke up many promising home raids and as a result, Cheltenham once again began to win all the possession. Dave Dangerfield almost made the best use of it with yet another long range effort but again Maskell proved unbeatable from this distance by plucking the ball out of the air at full stretch.

Then, in the 80th minute, Alexander beat Lailey on the flanks and cut into the box but having done all the difficult work, he shot too weakly on the left foot and Hall gathered with ease. Two minutes later, Wycombe brought on Terry Reardon to bolster midfield, replacing Tony Horsemann.

Lewis, scorer of 21 goals in as many games this term, lofted a close range header over the bar in the closing stages and just after Perrin had seen Wycombe's final effort saved by Hall, referee Spencer brought this excellent second half to a close.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock; D. Alexander, H. Kennedy, M. Hollifield, A. Horsemann (sub T. Reardon 82 mins), K. Searle, S. Perrin.
CHELTENHAM: K. Hall; R. Thorncliffe, P. Crowley, A. Jeffries, J. Lailey, T. Jones, T. Wagstaffe, D. Dangerfield; K. Sken, D. Lewis, C. Casey, Sub J. Murphy (not used).
Referee: T. Spencer (Swindon).
Half time: 1-1. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Horsemann (40) pen, Hollifield (47), Birdseye (49). Cheltenham — Lewis (13) pen.
Official attendance: 5,001.

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 3, Cheltenham Town 1

star Julian Lailey, now with the "Robins." The balding Roger Thorncliffe was also quick into action, turning the ball back to keeper Ken Hall as Searle pressed strongly.

It was eight minutes before Wanderers created their first chance. Tony Horsemann slipped and Ken Hall as Searle pressed strongly. It was eight minutes before Wanderers created their first chance. Tony Horsemann slipped and Ken Hall as Searle pressed strongly.

A low cross from Perrin was hastily cleared in the 10th minute and then Kennedy vollied a drive from the edge of the box but Hall saved with ease.

Things were looking good for Wycombe. But then, 13

beating Maskell's dive from the penalty spot.

That early reverse certainly took Wycombe by surprise. With Pat Casey beating Bullock for pace on the flanks, they made all the running as the Blues failed to get into the game. Fortunately for them, Casey's ability to get behind a defence was spelt by poor crosses, several of which went behind the goal.

With Cheltenham pressing forward, Wanderers were denied much of the possession and with none of their middle three playing at their best at this stage, what ball they did win was infuriatingly wasted with poor passing. Distribution from defence was often hurried while the front runners, back in their own half also failed to combine well.

Maskell, whose handling early on had been a little suspect, saved full length from Casey after 33 minutes and as Cheltenham continued to revel in the time and space, plus lack of commitment in midfield, it looked as though they would go into the dressing rooms with a deserved interval lead.

Then, in the 40th minute, their skipper Jeffries committed a needless foul. The ball had gone when he brought down Steve Perrin right under the nose of referee Spencer inside the area.

Not only did Jeffries' name go into the book but Cheltenham paid a further price when Mr. Spencer rightly ordered a penalty which Horsemann drove expertly into the corner of the net, sending Hall the wrong way.

That incident could well have

repeated the move.

Dave Alexander, preferred to Terry Reardon in midfield, slipped the ball to Horsemann, who in turn set up the chance for Hollifield. Once again, Mick's pace took him past the defence and this time Hall had no chance with the fierce left foot drive that beat him all the way.

With the crowd still buzzing, Paul Birdseye joined another attack two minutes later. Breaking into top gear on the wing, the full back took the ball past one, two, three defenders and then completed his run with a perfectly placed drive into the net from a difficult angle.

The first few minutes of the new half had completely transformed the game. Wycombe were now well and truly in the driving seat, almost beyond